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ABSTRACT

The grammatical phenomenon in Japanese known as Ga-No conversion is examined. In this phenomenon, the nominative particle "ga" can be converted to genitive particle "no" in embedded sentences with a nominal head such as a relative clause or complementary clause. A pragmatic constraint to this conversion that has not previously been explored is proposed: that the Ga-No conversion fails to apply if the ga-marked subject is a focus of the embedded sentence. Cross-linguistic and theoretical implications are discussed, particularly in the contexts of Korean and English. It is concluded that in Korean, the nominative/genitive particle conversion is so severely restricted at the syntactic and semantic level that there is no room for such a pragmatically motivated constraint. In English, it was found that as in Japanese, genitive-marked subjects are more difficult to focalize than accusative-marked subjects, bearing out the theory proposed here. Contains 21 references. (MSE)

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A pragmatic constraint on particle conversion in Japanese

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1. Introduction[1]

Modern Japanese exhibits a grammatical phenomenon known as Ga-No conversion, in which the nominative particle *ga* can be converted to genitive particle *no* in embedded sentences with a nominal head such as relative clauses and complement clauses, as shown below:

(1) Kore wa tasikani [haha *ga no* katta]yubiwa desu.
this-TOP surely mother bought ring is
"This is surely the ring my mother bought."

(2) [Taroo *ga no* kite ita] koto o sitte odoroita.
come-GER existed NOML ACC know-GER became surprised
"I was surprised to know that Taro had come."

Various types of constraints have been proposed to explain the cases where *ga* may not convert to *no*, such as morpho-syntactic constraints and constraints related to language processing and stylistic factors (cf. Tanaka 1964, Mikami 1972, Harada 1971, Shibatani 1975, 1978, Inoue 1976, Makino 1980 et al.). In this paper, we will explore a pragmatic constraint on Ga-No conversion which has not thoroughly been studied in the previous literature and address its cross-linguistic and theoretical implications.

The organization of this paper is as follows: In section 2, we will propose a pragmatic constraint on the application of Ga-No conversion. Section 3 will explore cross-linguistic and theoretical implications of the pragmatic constraint on Ga-No conversion in the context of a comparison to Korean and English. Conclusion and prospects for further study will be presented in Section 4.

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2. A pragmatic constraint on the application of Ga-No conversion

It is known that the subject marker *ga* is classified into two types depending on the interpretation of the noun phrase it marks, viz. the "exhaustive listing" *ga* which accords the meaning "X and only X" or "It is X that..." to the noun phrase it marks, and the "descriptive" *ga* which lacks such meaning and neutrally describes actions or temporary

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states (Kuno 1973). Each type of *ga* is exemplified below:

(3) Saru *ga* ningen no senzo desu. (exhaustive listing)
monkey mankind GEN ancestor is
"It is the monkey that is the ancestor of mankind." (ibid, 53)

(4)Hanako *ga* ryoori o tukutte kureta. (neutral description)
dish ACC prepared-GER gave
"Hanako prepared a dish for me."

By using the more general term "focus," the function of the exhaustive listing *ga* can be paraphrased as the function of focalizing the marked noun phrase (cf. Sugimoto 1986, Amano 1993). If we apply the cleft-sentence construction, which has a function similar to that of the exhaustive listing *ga* in respect to focalization, as in (3'), we can see that *saru* in (3) is the focus of the sentence.

(3') Ningen no senzo de aru no wa saru desu.
mankind ancestor monkey is
"It is the monkey that is the ancestor of mankind."
(underlining indicates the position of focus)

The distinction between descriptive *ga* and exhaustive listing *ga* is closely related to the the applicability of Ga-No conversion. The following examples show the acceptability of subject phrases marked by *no*:

(5) [Hanako *ga/no* tukutte kureta] ryoori ni sitatuzumi o utta.
prepare-GER gave dish licked lips hit
"We licked our lips over a dish Hanako prepared for us." (neutral description)

(6) [Yama ni nizi *ga/no* kakatte iru] no ga mieta.
mountain on rainbow hang-GER exist NOML NOM was seen
"It was seen that rainbow is over the mountain." (neutral description)

(7) Watasi wa [saru *ga* **no* ningen no senzo de aru] koto o sitte odoroita.
I NOML know surprised
"I was surprised to know that it is the monkey that is the ancestor of man."(exhaustive listing)

(8) [Nihon no naka de itiban Tookyoo *ga* **no* sumi nikui] koto wa tasika da.
Japan in first live tough certain
"It is certain that Tokyo is the hardest city to live in Japan." (exhaustive listing)

As the four examples above demonstrate, although the descriptive *ga* readily

converts to *no*, the exhaustive listing *ga* cannot so readily be converted to *no*.

If we consider that the function of the exhaustive listing *ga* is focalization, we can propose a pragmatic constraint that Ga-No conversion fails to apply when the subject noun phrase is the focus of the embedded sentence. Validity of this claim is further substantiated by the fact that Ga-No conversion is blocked when the subject is followed by focus adverbial particles such as *dake* 'only,' *bakari* 'only,' and *nomi* 'only,' and *made* 'even' (Tanaka 1964).

(9) [Yamada-san dake *ga *?no* tanonda] ryoori wa esukarugo ryoori desita
ordered dish escargot dish was
"The dish that only Yamada-san ordered was an escargot dish."

(10)[Nihonzin bakari *ga *?no* semerareru] koto ni wa nattoku ga ikanai.
Japanese be blamed at can not accept
"I cannot accept that only the Japanese are blamed."

(11) Sore wa [syusyoo nomi *ga *?no* motte iru] kengen da.
It prime minister have-GER authority is
"It is authority which only the prime minister has."

(12) [Osyoku ni Tanaka butyoo made *ga *?no* kakawatte ita] zizitu wa syokku datta.
corruption in chief director was involved fact shocking
"I was shocked at the fact that even Chief Tanaka was involved in the corruption."

On the basis of the observations made above, we propose the following pragmatic constraint:

(13) A pragmatic constraint on Ga-No conversion
Ga-No conversion fails to apply if the *ga*-marked subject is a focus of the embedded sentence.

3. Cross-linguistic implications of the pragmatic constrain on particle conversion

In this section, we will address cross-linguistic implications of the pragmatic constraint on Ga-No conversion in Japanese. Specifically, in the following two subsections, we will inquire whether the similar phenomenon is observable in Korean and English. In the last subsection, we will address the possible theoretical implications for the universal definition of "subject."

3.1 Particle conversion in Korean

Korean is known to have a nominative/genitive particle conversion similar to Ga-No conversion in Japanese, but as pointed out by Kim (1993) and Noma (1995), it does not occur as extensively as in Japanese. Kim (1993) notes that the genitive marker *uy* in (14) and (15) is acceptable whereas it is unacceptable in (16):

(14) [nay-*ka* /na-*uy* sarangha-nun] sokuk
I-NOM I-GEN love-ADN homeland
"the homeland which I love"

(15) [saram *i/uy* sikhi-l] tori
person NOM/GEN do-REL principle
"the principle which people should obey"

(16) [ku *ka/*uy* in-nun] bang
he NOM/GEN exist-REL room
"the room in which he is"

Although Kim (1993) does not offer any explanation for the differential acceptability in the use of *uy* noted above, we suspect that the use of *uy* in (16) is not felicitous because the inherent possessive interpretation is not guaranteed between the dependent noun *ku* ('he') and the head noun *bang* ('room'). The room in which he is situated may or may not be in his possession. On the other hand, the inherent possessive interpretation is established between the dependent nouns and the head nouns in (14) and (15) (respectively *na* and *sokuk*, *saram* and *tori*). For the sake of comparison, the Japanese genitive particle *no* is felicitous in the counterparts to (14), (15) and (16):

(14') [watasi *no* aisuru] sokoku
I love homeland

(15') [hito *no* mamoru] doori
person keep principle

(16') [kare *no* iru] heya
he exist room

This difference between Korean and Japanese noted above appears to suggest that the Korean genitive marker *uy* is not yet as fully grammaticalized as its Japanese counterpart *no* in terms of the marking of a nominalized clause subject.

In this vein, it is also important to note that *uy* is more readily omissible than its Japanese counterpart *no* in simple genitive constructions such as the following (Ogoshi 1989, 343):

(17) Japanese

eigo *(*no*) sensei	mado *(*no*) soto
English teacher	window outside
"a teacher of English"	"outside the window"

(18) Korean

yenge (*uy*) sensayngnim	chang (*uy*) pakk
English teacher	window outside

If the genitive marker *uy* is not fully grammaticalized even in simple genitive constructions such as (18), then it follows that *uy* does not acquire the full-fledged function of marking a subject of more complex nominalized clauses (cf. 16) in contrast to the Japanese counterpart *no*.

What does this characterization of the Korean genitive particle *uy* suggest in respect to the pragmatic constraint proposed in (13)? It seems to suggest that the nominative/genitive particle conversion in Korean is so severely restricted at the syntactic and semantic level that there is no room for such a pragmatically motivated constraint.

3.2 Marking of the subject in English event gerundive[2]

English does not have a nominative/genitive particle conversion of the type observed in Japanese and Korean. However, it is known that an accusative/genitive case conversion is observed in the marking of subject in gerundive complements referred to as "event gerundives" (Yasutake 1995), as exemplified below:

(19) John insisted on *Mary Mary's* coming.

In order to inquire whether English has a pragmatic constraint similar to that proposed in Japanese, we collected acceptability judgements of a pair of the sentences which differ in terms of the marking of embedded subject, i.e. accusative/genitive. Our prediction prior to the investigation was that, similarly to the Japanese Ga-No conversion, genitive-marked subjects are more difficult to focalize than accusative-marked subjects. This prediction is based on the assumption that accusative-marked subjects in English are comparable to nominative-marked subject in Japanese in that they both encode "core" grammatical cases in contrast to the more peripheral genitive case (cf. Blake 1994). Our prediction was born out by acceptability judgements as shown below, which consistently favor the accusative-marked subjects rather than the genitive-marked subjects when they are the target of focalization.

(20) a. I insisted on only *John* coming.

b. *?I insisted on only *John's* coming.

(21) a. Do you mind only *John* not attending the party?

b. *?Do you mind only *John's* not attending the party?

3.3 Implications for a universal definition of "subject"

From a cross-linguistic perspective, it is important to note that Japanese and English share a similar pragmatic constraint on the genitive-marked subject in the nominalized embedded clauses. Specifically, the pragmatic constraint on the genitive-marked subject appears to shed new light on the universal definition of "subject" along the line of "Subject Properties List " proposed by Keenan (1976). Subject Properties List is a cluster of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic properties intended to help identify so-called "basic subjects (b-subjects), viz. "coding properties," "behavior and control properties," and "semantic properties," each of which consists of more specific statements of properties. For instance, semantic properties include the statement that "b-subjects are normally the topic of the b-sentence (basic sentence: Horie)" (ibid, 318). It is not entirely certain at this stage whether the pragmatic constraint on the marking of the embedded subject in Japanese and English has wider implications beyond the two languages. However, it is certainly worthwhile to inquire whether the pragmatic constraint observed in Japanese and English points to a universally valid property of basic subjects such as the following:

(22) (Tentative) Universally valid pragmatic property of basic subjects

Only basic subjects can be the target of focalization.

4. Conclusion

This paper explores the pragmatic constraint on a particle conversion phenomenon in Japanese, viz. Ga (nominative)-No(genitive) conversion, and addresses its cross-linguistic and theoretical implications in the context of a comparison to Korean and English. Further study will be needed to explicate the nature of the pragmatic constraint observed in Japanese and English in relation to studies of "nouniness" (Ross 1973) and "nominality" (Givón 1990), within which the semantic and pragmatic nature of the case conversion phenomena in the nominalized clauses (e.g. nominative/genitive, accusative/genitive) can be directly addressed.

Notes.

1. Preliminary results of this research were presented at the 111th annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of Japan held at Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan, October 15-16, 1995 (Horie and Saito 1995). The authors thank Setsuko Arita, Akio Kamio, Hiromu Kato, Duncan Macintyre and Debra Occhi for their insightful comments on the earlier version of this paper. The usual disclaimer applies. Horie's participation in the LSA annual meeting is partially funded by an overseas travel grant from the Tohoku Kaihatsu Kinen Foundation, which is gratefully acknowledged. The current study is a part of the on-going project on the Contrastive Linguistic Study of Nominalized Constructions in Japanese and Korean funded by a grant-in-aid from the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Grant #07710351). The following abbreviations are used in the glosses used in this paper: ACC (Accusative marker), ADN (Adnominal predicate form), GEN (Genitive marker), GER (Gerundive form), NOM (Nominative marker), NOML(Nominalizer), TOP(Topic marker).

2. After the presentation of the earlier version of this paper at the 111th annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of Japan (Sendai, Japan, October 1995), it was brought to our attention that Yasutake (1995) discussed the accusative/genitive case conversion in English event gerundives and presented an analysis of the semantic difference between the accusative-marked subject and the genitive-marked subject in terms of the notion of focus, which lends support to our discussion in this section. The authors wish to thank Tomoko Yasutake for bringing her work to our attention.

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